**Recruitment of Interpreter Candidates for Languages 0f Limited Diffusion**

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One of the greatest challenges in providing appropriate healthcare language access in our country today is that of locating and training interpreter candidates for the growing number of languages of limited diffusion. Below we hope to provide some suggestions and ideas on where to find either earlier arrivals from the areas of the world from whence immigrants and refugees are currently arriving, who have had time and opportunity to acquire English language skills through formal or informal means and/or more recent arrivals who have come with a higher level of English language skills and the drive and passion to become medical interpreters. Additionally we will offer some recruitment strategies and advice on pitfalls of which to beware when recruiting from small language groups.

**WHERE TO LOOK**

The first and most obvious step is to establish relationships with any and every organization in your area that draws international participants and/or particular language groups. These would include:

* Refugee resettlement organizations in your city or region that provide refugee resettlement assistance to arriving refugees. Nine agencies, called Voluntary Agencies, work with the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement to determine placement of new refugees from overseas refugee camps to cities in the U.S. The Voluntary Agencies contract with non-profit organizations in the U.S. that provide resettlement assistance. To find a list of the Voluntary Agencies and the local organizations that work with them, go to [www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/voluntary-agencies).
* Local community organizations with a particular ethnic focus such as Hispanic, Chinese or African associations.
* “Sister City” organizations often started by local residents who are natives of the distant “sister” city.
* Temples, monasteries, mosques, synagogues, churches.
* Nearby university and college campuses – ethnic student organizations, international student offices, language departments, faculty from other countries or those specializing in the languages and cultures of LLDs.
* Advanced Adult ELL/ESL classes – these may be classes carried out as part of your local public education system, as church mission efforts, or as volunteer opportunities by campus organizations, community colleges or local universities.

**PURPOSE**

Once you have established a relationship with these organizations they can help in a variety of ways by:

* Posting and distributing interpreter job listings. For example, the Asian Affairs office on a particular campus has an email list of all Asian students and routinely sends out mass mailings to them. When new interpreter needs for an Asian language arise within the local healthcare system this office includes job postings for interpreters in those mailings.
* Allowing you to be part of their programming in order to do a presentation on health care interpreting, what it involves, and resources for training.
* Agreeing to help co-sponsor educational or interpreter training sessions through provision of financial support and/or locations for said activities.
* Making direct referrals of speakers of LLD’s who participate in their programs.

**BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES**

There are still many people who are unaware of the skills needed, along with the ethical obligations required, to be an effective healthcare interpreter. It will be important to insure that the leaders of the organizations you work with have a clear understanding of what medical interpreting involves before you ask them to become part of your recruitment strategy. An introduction to the NCIHC National Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics early on is a great place to start.

You will want to be clear about the time and other resource commitments involved for any required trainings as well as what the likely return on investment to the interpreter would be i.e. how often/how many hours/when would an interpreter for the particular language be likely to work. Are you looking for full-time, part time or as-needed (PRN) employees?

Keep in mind that at times speakers of LLD’s include refugees from both sides of a given conflict. Needless to say, the understandings and feelings they have of and for one another didn’t disappear when they moved to the U. S. They may also come with other barriers to trust and confidence in other members of the particular language group including different levels of economic, social and educational status. Due to cultural or religious beliefs there may be resistance within the group to certain candidates due to gender issues. Learn as much as possible about what the particular issues might be so you can be prepared to help interpreter candidates problem solve should they run into these barriers while performing their duties as an interpreter.

Some folks are members of ethnic groups that have been oppressed to the degree that they have little confidence in themselves and their potential to be an interpreter. It may take considerable encouragement and time for members of those groups to feel empowered enough to carry out such an important role. The opportunity to talk with interpreters of similar backgrounds about the work, as well as to observe them performing in the job, may help bring new interpreters into the fold.

Finally, it is also well to note that several factors may result in interpreters who can only be trained through oral techniques. Some LLD’s have no standard system of writing or have a writing system that is not widely used. There are many languages in the Americas, Asia, Oceania and Africa which fall into this category. At other times the lack of opportunity to get a formal education will result in interpreter recruits who are not literate in their own language. Limited literacy skills will also impact training techniques and skill sets such as sight translation.

Additionally, heritage speakers are often not as fluent in the target language as recent immigrants and may also only have oral skills due to little formal training in the language. It is important to be sure that a heritage speaker is tested for LLD proficiency either through formal testing or with older, non-family speakers for intelligibility and fluency before going through training.

These steps and considerations should help cut down on candidate referrals of people with extremely rudimentary knowledge of English; who have a conflict of interest that could impact their objectivity as an interpreter and/or the trust of the community; who are bound by constraints on their finances and time; and those with limited proficiency in the LLD.

**Please give us feedback on this tip at:** <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LLDTrainingTipRecruiting1GV2014>

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National Council on Interpreting

in Health Care